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Moreover, her life would some day begin again. Whether birth was rapid or slow, the experience of the suffering deepened her sense of compassion and, as will be shown, brought her closer to fulfillment of her life role.

Habit

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If mutual help organized relationships, habit (*khob*) stabilized them. *Khob* means "to be used to, accustomed to, habituated." A first occurrence was an example and set the pattern for all subsequent occurrences. With one performance one was accustomed to an action. For instance, shortly after the temple was built 2 people died, deaths in Bang Chan "always occurred in pairs," it was the temple's "habit." Moreover, "the head priest could never expel a priest because he had never done so." Again, a few women saw to it that during this period their babies were given a few grains of rice (even though they were far too young to be offered any rice regularly), so that "later on, if they got sick, they could always at least eat rice," for "they would be used to it." "Glutinous rice was not good for babies in Bang Chan, but in North Thailand (where it was a staple) it could be eaten because people were used to it." Someone had set the example which started the custom.

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41. Bang Chan's Buddhist phrasing of the meaning of pain and death in childbirth seems to indicate that childbirth occurred under psycho-cultural conditions that induced relaxation and reduced fear and pain. An "easy" delivery lasted 2 hours. According to a modern medical theory, Dick-Read: Childbirth Without Fear, passim) lack of fear of childbirth leads to mental and physical relaxation which in turn reduces pain and labor. Dr. Dan Bradley observed that labor was shorter among Siamese women than among non-Siamese. "Facts seem to prove that parturition is both shorter and easier to Siamese mothers than is usual to Europeans and Americans" (Bradley, 1865:79). We accept his first-hand observation because he had 40 or more years of experience in delivering babies, both Thai and non-Thai (missionary wives, etc.), and suggest that it may be taken as proof of mental and physical relaxation derived from lack of fear. Although the missionary women may have been frightened because they were in a far country, Dick-Read argues that fear of childbirth has long been present among American women and this fear has the effect of longer, harder labor.

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A major clustering of first experiences, and so of habit formation, was in intra-uterine existence. Every experience of the mother was shared by the fetus. After birth, a baby daily formed habits of eating, sleeping, and crying, and later, as a child, habits of respect, obedience, truth-telling, etc. To create good habits efforts were bent to control and ameliorate any first experience: to make it as correct as possible; to seek out favorable astrological moments; to ask auspicious, skilled, or learned persons to be part of the initial action. An example was the establishment of nursing. When the baby was put to the breast the first time, the objective was not nourishment but to establish a good habit, viz. copious and strong sucking from an ample milk supply. Only after this first nursing did breast-milk as nourishment become important. If on this occasion he did not nurse well, he would have the habit of eating poorly all his life. Moreover, whatever the mother's experience with her first-born, it would not only be repeated every time he nursed, but set the nursing pattern for all subsequent children she bore. For her first-born, though, a mother would have had no previous experience of making milk. She had to be taught, or shown, how to make good milk, just as the baby had to be taught to suck, and later taught to eat rice. Consequently, the first-born baby was almost always first nursed by another person (not necessarily a kinswoman) with copious milk. Then 2 or 3 days later, because the example had been set, good milk came in and the mother started nursing. What was to be avoided at all costs was a first suck of colostrum, which appeared to be "unfit, early milk" from an insufficiently lactating breast. This would be a poor precedent. Until a mother decided her milk was right for nursing, a baby subsisted usually on honey and water, and maybe a little crushed banana. If a woman were not satisfied with her nursing capacities for her first-born child, when the second child was born she might ask another lactating woman to give the baby a first nursing so as to improve her own habit.⁴² One woman flatly said her own milk was always unfit as proved by her babies' health, so she used a bottle of (canned) cow's milk from the start. She felt she had the habit

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⁴² Bradley (79-80) felt that the dehydration attendant on lying by the hot fire significantly reduced the quantity and quality of the milk.

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153 of making poor milk. Any woman whose milk flowed early and
853 well needed no example, for she was seen as having the
habit as an in-born characteristic so deeply ingrained that
it came through from a previous incarnation.⁴³ After nurs-
ing was established by the mother, babies were not often
given over to another woman's breast because they were
reputed to refuse it, "being not used to it."

In sum, the nursing patterns in Bang Chan varied with
the previous lactating experience (if any) of the mother,
and the ordinal position of her children.

(262) Hauck shows the old way of establishing good eating
(846) habits in a baby. "If a mother ate small amounts of many
different kinds of foods while lying by the fire, the child
would not get diarrhea when he ate these foods for the first
time" (1939:14). Through the beneficial effects of the
fire, any deleterious qualities of the foods were eliminated
(as we shall see in "The Fire of Maturity") and the child
had his first experience with these foods in the breast
milk.

153 Bang Chan's life was full of secondary opportunities
for starting new habits. Every rice crop, every boat
purchased, every house built, and all the rites of the life
cycle could, if handled properly, start a fresh and fortu-
nate sequence on its way. We shall have more to say of this
in discussing maturity.

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The familiar principle of imitation (Anuman Rajadhoni:
154), the influence of like making for like, operated
throughout daily life in Bang Chan. An action, event or
presence emanated an analogous influence on its surround-
ings. A woman returned from a visit to the midwife with all
possible speed in order to achieve a speedy delivery of her
child a few weeks hence. Another pregnant woman visited
the temple on the final day of the rainy-season Buddhist

[829] ⁴³. Bradley's informants gave an example of a deeply
ingrained habit: "European and American mothers can better
dispense [with the fire-rest] because their own mothers
from time immemorial have never been in the practice of the
custom, and consequently their constitutions do not at all
require it (p.79)."